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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0165  
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 4279  
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0493  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4896  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0748  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0523  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0775  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4476  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2767  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0787  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7542  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1426  
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
RUEABNE/DEA HQS WASHDC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0333  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1407  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2734  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC 0332  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC 0183

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 000948

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INL ANDREW BUHLER  
ASTANA FOR ANTHONY BEAVER

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [KG](#) [AF](#) [IR](#) [UZ](#)  
SUBJECT: UNODC REPORTS FIRST PRECURSOR SEIZURE IN  
UZBEKISTAN SINCE 2001

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -- PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

11. (SBU) Summary: Poloff met on August 8 with Mark Colhoun, Senior Regional Law Enforcement Advisor at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Office in Central Asia, which is based in Tashkent. Colhoun said the recently conducted Operation Tarcet netted 1.6 tons of acetic anhydride, the first seizure of this chemical in Uzbekistan since 1997 and the first precursor of any kind since 2001. Larger quantities of precursors were seized in Iran and Pakistan, the first such seizures since March 2001. Colhoun reported the operation was "well organized and executed" and helped to raise awareness throughout the region about attempts to import narcotics precursors into Afghanistan. Colhoun also noted that meth is a growing concern after two laboratories were discovered in Kyrgyzstan in the past year, where ephedra "grows in the wild."

First Seizure Since 1997  
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12. (U) On August 8 Colhoun informed poloff at a meeting at UNODC's Central Asia Headquarters that the second phase of Operation Tarcet, which targeted heroin precursor chemicals bound for Afghanistan, recently concluded in Uzbekistan (but is still winding down in some countries). He reported that in April 2008 officers of Uzbekistan's State Customs Committee and National Security Service seized 1.6 tons of acetic anhydride on an Afghanistan-bound container which originated in Korea. The precursor seizure was the first of this chemical in Uzbekistan since 1997 and the first of any kind since 2001.

Success Elsewhere in the Region  
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13. (SBU) Authorities also broke long seizure droughts in

Iran, where five tons of acetic anhydride were seized, and in Pakistan, where officials identified 14 tons. Colhoun said these were the first seizures of this precursor in these countries since March 2001. He added that Iranian authorities also seized 16 tons of acetal chloride, which he explained is an alternate precursor for heroin production. The Tajiks also reportedly seized 156 kilos of acetic anhydride. Colhoun said UNODC's Operation Tarcet was a big success, and that it was "well organized and executed." He added that it was a big confidence booster for law enforcement in the various states, especially for the members of the Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC), which helped coordinate efforts. Colhoun also noted it raised awareness throughout the broad region surrounding Afghanistan about criminal efforts to smuggle precursors into Afghanistan for heroin production.

Is Meth on the Rise in Central Asia?

14. (SBU) Colhoun informed poloff that methamphetamines are thus far not widely used in Central Asia; however he said UNODC is concerned it could be a growing threat to the region. He mentioned that two meth labs have been discovered in Kyrgyzstan in the past year, where the active ingredient ephedra "grows in the wild." Cheaply produced meth, he said, could quickly permeate Central Asia and adversely impact communities already grappling with the higher volume of drugs emanating from Afghanistan in recent years.

TASHKENT 00000948 002 OF 002

Comment:

15. (U) With INL support, UNODC has been very active in upgrading security on the Uzbek-Afghan border, where projects continue. However, the positive news about the first precursor seizure in Uzbekistan in many years will reinforce to Uzbek officials that counter-narcotics efforts should not focus solely on what may be coming from Afghanistan but should involve close scrutiny of cargo heading into Afghanistan as well. The regional success of Operation Tarcet also bodes well for CARICC's efforts to encourage collaboration among Central Asian states and sends a message to drug lords that it may get harder and harder to bring in raw materials for narcotics production.

BUTCHER